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MHouse Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

December 11th, 2018

Rep. Triston Cole-Chair

Room 521

House Office Building

Lansing, MI

Mr. Chairman, Committee members, my name is Denny Olson and I'm here to testify in favor of Senate Bill 396 S-6.

For centuries spring thaw has been the most challenging time of year for the forest industry as well as those who oversee road maintenance. Both have mega investments. On one hand there's an industry generating millions of tax dollars. On the other hand, are public agencies dependent on those tax dollars with the responsibility of managing expenditures and sheltering taxpayer infrastructure investment.

In recent years the need for a stronger working relationship between industry and **ALL** road agencies has increased. The time has come to find a workable solution where operating consistency becomes the norm, whereby loggers and road managers can operate with confidence that; 1. Road integrity will be maintained providing safe travel conditions for all users and 2. Both existing and new industry can rely on a consistent flow of raw product to keep mills and jobs in Michigan.

This need for consistency is what prompted the writing of Michigan Senate Bill 396 authored by Senator Tom Casperson. In its current form SB 396 S (6) offers a balance between maintaining local road integrity and the flexibility to operate on certain roads during spring thaw. Having consistent operating procedures between counties will aid greatly in supporting Michigan's forest industry.

What SB 396 will do is;

Allow log trucks designated route loading on county roads to include maximum lengths (70 feet) as allowed in MCLA 257.719, maximum widths (102 inches) allowed in MCLA 257.717 and maximum weights as specified in MCLA 257.722 including the bridge formula. These are standard dimensions for the trucking industry.



Allows for the bonding of dirt and gravel roads during weight restrictions with a maximum bond of \$5,000.00 per mile. Regardless the amount of bond per mile, the bond holder is responsible in full for damage caused to the road during forestry operations. Dirt and gravel roads with no domiciles must be restored to their original or better than original condition when the management project is completed. For gravel roads with a full-time residence, the owner of a vehicle transporting forest products shall cease hauling immediately, notify the road commission immediately and repair the road immediately if any portion of the road becomes impassible for 2-wheel traffic.

If it becomes law, SB 396 S (6) shifts financial liability and responsibility to the bond purchaser to ensure a bonded road remains passible and repaired to the satisfaction of the road commission should damage occur. With that in mind does it make sense that any business bonding a road would purposely destroy a road knowing the repair could amount to tens of thousands of dollars?

Allows the operation of a pneumatic tired forestry or special mobile equipment used in silvicultural operations on roadways, if the equipment has a slow-moving vehicle emblem and a flashing, rotating or oscillating amber light and if the equipment is unladen. Unladen means the equipment is not carrying any materials including logs, other than attachments used in the daily operations including tire chains, tracks and road drags.

The operator of the forestry equipment must give notice to the road commission before travel begins. Notification will include the route to be taken. The road authority may recover damages from the equipment owner which are caused during the move.

Pneumatic tired forestry equipment is more prevalent than ever in the Lake States Region. Modern pneumatic tired harvesters, forwarders and skidders are equipped with heated cabs, abundant lighting for night time operations, and most equipment is designed to meet stringent width requirements for forest management activity on public land. Even though forest management equipment is comparable to construction equipment for weight per inch of tire and much smaller than modern farm equipment, it is treated radically different in its ability to utilize public road ways. Why?

When driving forestry equipment between jobs is an option, it's a one-time move and will not be repeated for the duration of the timber sale. By comparison, agricultures use of public roadways is repeated several times daily until the cultivating, harvesting or fertilizing activity is completed. The same is true for construction equipment used by local government. Does the road know the difference between types of equipment? Is a logger's insurance or common sense different from a farmer or road agency employee?

If SB 396 S (6) is passed into law one thing is certain, the forest industry will be placed under a very heavy load (pun intended) to monitor itself in the court of public opinion. As the song says, one bad apple can spoil the whole bunch and it will be up to industry to make sure the bad fruit stays out of the basket.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Board and members of the Great lakes Timber Professionals Association.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Denny Olson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Denny Olson, GLTPA MI